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THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2009

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# INPORT NEWS

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## CHRISTMAS DINNER

### Spirit of giving

KAESHA FORAND  
 InPort News Staff

PORT COLBORNE — Jack O'Neil believes nobody should be alone for Christmas.


For the past 12 years, O'Neil, Mike Feagan and Larry Olm have organized the Community Christmas Dinner and this year they're expecting to feed close to 300 people.

## OLYMPIC TORCH: Relay goes through Port Colborne Monday en route to Vancouver



KAESHA FORAND Staff Photo

The Olympic Torch made a stop in front of Port Colborne city hall Monday afternoon where the flame was passed from Naomi Cowan, left to Daniel Grincovicius of Port Colborne. Also see next Thursday's edition of the InPort News for a complete story and scrapbook of photos highlighting the torch's journey across the city.

See Inside: **PUPP'S INSERTS**  
 Full Distribution  


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# upfront

■ **CHRISTMAS DINNER:** Tomorrow at Port High

## Helping others is on the menu

FROM PAGE 1

Tomorrow, doors open at Port Colborne High School at 12:30 p.m. and dinner will be served restaurant style at 1 p.m. Guests can feast on turkey, ham and all the trimmings, plus coffee, tea and juice. Draw tickets will be given to each guest and a number of prizes will be raffled off.

"It's the same dinner but we're expecting a lot more people," O'Neill said, noting young families, seniors and those who want to have a good time in the company of others are welcome to the meal.

A number of local organizations support the event and any left over food is donated to the Port Cares Reach Out Centre.

Last year, 238 meals were served and 30 meals were delivered to those who couldn't make it.

"I enjoy it. It's giving and that's what Christmas is about."

Free taxi rides are offered to Port residents by calling Port Taxi at 905-835-2424 to bring people to Port High. A few special deliveries will also be made to those who can't make it out.

"We're helping people that are alone and have nothing and that want company. That's what Christmas is about — family," he said. "We have a smile and we greet everybody that comes in."

The group has enough volunteers to prepare, cook and serve the food and Katiwaki volunteers will serve food and entertain the crowd.

Feagan even got a call from a few Welland seniors looking to take part in the meal.

Seniors are starting to feel comfortable — it's not a hand out. They're starting to come back year after year."



KAESHA FORAND Staff Photo

Jack O'Neill unloads a turkey from the freezer for tomorrow's free Community Christmas Dinner to be held at the Port Colborne High School cafeteria for anyone who will either be alone or can't afford a Christmas dinner.

■ **HOLIDAY GIVING:** Seasonal program collects goods for those in need

## Donations pour in to Santa's Helpers

KAESHA FORAND  
InPort News Staff

PORT COLBORNE — Christmas is upon us and, thanks to Santa's Helpers, hundreds of gifts were put under the tree and cupboards were stocked with food.

Last week, "Santa's elves" set up shop in the Centre for Community Living gymnasium on McEae Ave. and were busy organizing donations for those in need.

Organizer Mieke Van Es was worried at the beginning of the season that there wouldn't be enough food and toys to go around.

However, donations poured in and — up until the last few days — continued to come in, including \$1,000 from Harvey's/ Swiss Chalet and bags filled with toys from Lakeshore Catholic High School.

"It's incredible," Van Es said while watching volunteers stack the bags filled with Play-Doh, board games, dolls, stuffed animals and sporting equipment.

She said 360 households were registered

and calls continued to come in with last-minute emergencies.

"Some people didn't think they needed it, but they lost their jobs. The one thing that amazed me this year is the generosity." People sent in cheques, businesses donated toys, mittens, stockings and food was dropped off in bins across the city.

Cash donations were used to purchase additional food since each family received a box filled with cereal, juice, pork and beans, pasta, cookies, peanut butter, jam and other canned goods.

"They do get a very generous basket and a ham."

Parents had the opportunity to pick out toys and stocking stuffers for children and teens received gift certificates for local stores.

"They are very happy. You can tell, otherwise they wouldn't come."

This year's positive turnout not only ensures a happy Christmas for hundreds of children and adults, it also helps secure next year's fundraising initiatives.



KAESHA FORAND Staff Photo  
Some of "Santa's elves" work in the toy section at the Santa's Helpers depot Thursday.

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# portraits

## St. Pat's welcomes St. Nick



STAFF PHOTOS Kaesha Forand

St. Patrick Elementary School traveled back in time for their Santa's Stuck in the '50s Christmas concert. Santa cleaned out the attic and found toys that were popular more than half a century ago including Play-Doh, slinkies, Mr. Potato Head and board games. He also found a few plastic pink flamingoes. The Grade 8 class also performed A Charlie Brown Christmas.



# INPORT NEWS

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## ourview

## Port shows its true colours at Christmas

Santa's helpers.

They're volunteers that come in many forms. They can be elves at the mall with Santa, helping children take pictures with the jolly old elf.

They could have been walking along the Port Colborne parade route, handing out candy to adults and children as they waited for the last float which carried Santa.

But in the Santa's Helpers program, they are volunteers who converge at The Centre For Community Living in the middle of December, taking registrations, packing boxes full of food and handing out toys to parents in need.

These elves don't judge or ask questions; they're there to help.

Mieke Van Es could be known as the head elf. She helps coordinate the program with a number of key volunteers.

Some write letters to businesses and send them out at the beginning of November. Others take registration for days before the presents are handed out.

And for five days, Santa calls in extra helpers to help deliver thousands of toys, clothing and food. Five helpers filled boxes with breakfast, lunch, supper and treats.

Three more helped parents choose Barbies, stuffed animals, board games and other toys.

There wouldn't be possible without the generosity of Port Colborne and Wainfleet residents.

This is the time of year where a number of organizations are seeking assistance, there is much need throughout Niagara.

Van Es was worried donations wouldn't come in like they have in the past. Her worries were eased as food, cash and toys poured in from across the city.

In the last few days donations continued to be collected. Some children expect extravagant gifts, while others would be happy with just a few to unwrap on Christmas morning. Thanks to Santa's Helpers, more than 360 families have a Christmas. That in itself is a blessing.

For some, Christmas is a season to give and this is the time of year where some people show their true colours.

An example are the organizers of the Community Christmas Dinner.

Larry Olm, Mike Feagan and Jack O'Neill don't hesitate to give up Christmas morning to ensure hundreds of other Port residents have a Christmas meal.

These men and their families know what the true meaning of Christmas is — giving and helping others in need.

To all volunteers who help co-ordinate events and meals, we thank you for your service.

To those who donated to a number of worthy causes, we offer you a pat on the back.

Happy holidays to all our readers. May you have a safe and happy holiday season.

## WARM HEARTS, WARM BODIES



Jackie Gagnon of McAvoy, Belan & Campbell sits with about 40 coats, hats, gloves and snow pants that employees gathered to help out the Koats for Kids program in Port Colborne.

Supplied Photo

## readers' views

## Thank you to supporters of our local conservation club

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those people who, year in and year out, keep the Port Colborne and District Conservation Club an important component of their community.

Our fundraising efforts would fall short if not for their continued generosity.

Many thanks to Frank Ruzyccki, Gloria and John Simon, Mike and Linda Sloat, Sandra Taylor, Bonnie Beres, Tanya Schultz, Dave Malloy,

Dave Earley, Dave Zezzala, Mark Adams, Doreen Ford, Bob Mahoney, Brad Burger, Al Peterson, Ty Richardson, Walter Oster, John Howard, Denis Kneze, Ken Moss, Jim Richardson and Gary Talosi.

Thank you to all who donated their time, talents, and gifts.

May you enjoy a safe and happy holiday.

Chris MacEachern  
Port Colborne

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## WORLD ISSUES

## Canada's future climate



Gwynne Dyer

The Copenhagen talks on climate change are going badly (at the time of writing this column), which doubtless pleases the federal government.

It thinks a weak agreement or none at all will serve Canada's economic interests better. It is wrong.

There are only two likely scenarios, really. One is the business-as-usual scenario, in which the developed countries do not reduce their greenhouse gas emissions fast enough and the developing countries just let it rip.

In the other, the rich countries make big emissions cuts in the next 10 or 15 years, and the developing countries at least cap their emissions. That better future is still ugly in many places — but not in Canada.

Nobody gets away unscathed in the business-as-usual scenario. When British Foreign Secretary David Miliband revealed the latest numbers from the G8's Hayfield Centre last October, predicting that a world in which emissions go unchecked may see a four degree C rise in average global temperature by 2060.

He simply said: "We cannot cope with a four-degree world."

Actually, Britain probably could cope. As an island, cooled by the surrounding ocean, it would be only three degrees warmer, which means that it would probably still be able to grow enough food to feed itself. That is vital in a four-degrees-warmer world, because almost nobody will be exporting food any more.

Oceans cover two-thirds of the planet's surface and are cooler than the land, so the average temperature over most land areas is higher than the average global temperature.

The Hayfield Centre predicts that a global average of plus four degrees means average temperatures five to six degrees higher in China, India, South-East Asia and most of Africa, and up to eight degrees higher in the Amazon (which would burn, of course).

The result would be a 40% fall in world wheat and corn production and a 30% fall in rice by 2060 — in a world that would, by then, have to feed 2 billion more people.

So there would be mass starvation and waves of desperate refugees trying to move to some country where they can still feed their kids.

## localbriefs

### SARACINO HONOURED FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

THOROLD — Bob Saracino was one of four regional councillors recognized for their years of public service at last week's regional council meeting.

These individuals have served their communities and the region as a whole with distinction for many years," regional Chair Peter Partington said in a news release.

"I wish to thank and congratulate them for their hard work and dedication over the years, which has often come at great personal sacrifice."

Saracino, who represents Port Colborne, has served in local and regional politics for a collective 36 years.

Saracino began his political career when he was elected Port Colborne alderman from 1972-76. From 1977 to 1995, he held the office of mayor, also serving at the region. Since 1997, he has been a directly elected regional councillor.

Other councillors recognized for their lengthy careers in municipal politics were Norm Nuttuck of Niagara Falls, 39 years; Bill Smeeton of Niagara Falls, 36 years; and Debbie Zimmerman of Grimsby, 30 years.

—InPort News Staff

### WATERMAIN PROJECT TO SPRING FORWARD IN APRIL

PORT COLBORNE — The city is moving ahead with a \$1.7-million large-diameter watermain project on Catharine and Sugarleaf Sts.

Ward 1 Coun. Bill Steele said the city portion of funding works out to about \$185,000. The work is to be done by Centennial Construction at a tendered price of \$1,753,926. The company was the low bidder in the tender process.

The work replaces two existing water-mains installed in 1928 and 1929.

The city applied for and received funding under the Infrastructure Stimulus Grant.

The city received funding from both the federal and provincial government, based on its portion of the project, estimated at \$650,000.

Construction is scheduled to be in April 2010 and will be complete by mid-July 2010.

—InPort News Staff

### ■ GWYNNE DYER

## Canadians should be concerned about climate change

FROM PAGE 4

Canada's only land border, fortunately, is with the United States, and the Americans would certainly seal the Mexican border against refugees from further south.

They would want Canadian water, though — and we would probably be short of water ourselves, because the further inland and the further north you go, the higher the temperature rise.

The Hadley Centre predicts that the thickly populated parts of Quebec, Ontario and the eastern Prairies would be an average of seven degrees hotter than they are today. Alberta, British Columbia and New Brunswick would be six degrees hotter, while Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, and PEI, surrounded by sea, might be down around plus four or five.

Would Canada still be a grain exporter at those temperatures? Would it even be able to feed itself? It depends on what happens to the rainfall, not just the temperature, but the answer might be no.

Not being self-sufficient in food in a starving world would be a very unpleasant experience.

On the other hand, suppose everybody signs a climate treaty so effective that world emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> peak and start to fall again by 2020. The latest study by the British Met Office says that would give us a 50% chance of halting the warming, a couple of decades later, at two degrees C. That is the better future, but it still isn't pretty.

An average global temperature two degrees higher means that average temperatures over land would rise around three

degrees — probably three-and-a-half degrees in the case of central Canada. If the rain still falls in the same places at the same times, that might leave Canadian food production at the same level or even higher, but closer to the equator it will be a different story.

In the tropics, the heat itself will be the main problem: rice yields collapse, for example, if the temperature is above 35 degrees during the critical fertilization period. In many places, even three degrees extra will push it into the red.

In the sub-tropics, drought will be the crop-killer, as the rainfall shifts further away from the equator. Even the rain that does fall is likely to evaporate again from the hot, dry soil.

A few countries far from the equator like Russia and Canada may still be exporting grain at two degrees higher, but many of today's major grain exporters will be out of the business. (Australia is already on the way out.)

Assume a 20% loss of global food production and a billion more people by 2030, and we can expect recurring famines in the tropics and the sub-tropics.

Hungry people move, across borders if necessary and people in less afflicted countries may use force to stop them.

Regimes that cannot feed their people tend to collapse. Failed states and civil wars multiply.

There may even be regional wars between countries that share the same river system when the water gets scarce.

The two-degree scenario is ugly and almost inevitable, but Canada would still be safe.

You get big problems closer to the equator at plus two degrees. At plus four, Canada faces catastrophe too. That is the difference, for Canadians, between an effective climate change treaty and a botched one or none at all.

Canadians, including the government, assume that we will be OK no matter what happens on the climate front, so we can afford to put our other interests (like protecting the income from the tar sands) first. It is not true.

Gwynne Dyer's latest book is *Climate Wars*, published in Canada by Random House and Vintage.

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December 29

**WEDNESDAY**

December 30

**THURSDAY**

December 31



# SCHOOL LIFE: Curtains rise on Dewitt Carter Christmas play



KAESHA FORAND STAFF Photo

Dewitt Carter Elementary School held its Surfin' Santa Christmas play at the school yesterday afternoon for parents and students. The play also included music by their Christmas choir.

# PORT CARES: Prosperity initiative reaches out to more of those in need

## New grant to help single parents, working poor

MAGGIE RIOPELLE  
InPort News Staff

**PORT COLBORNE** — With a new Prosperity Initiative grant, Port Cares can care for people most in need by providing winter clothing and food gift cards.

There is a great demand for basic needs such as food, shelter and clothing that without Port Cares' client services would not be met, said manager Judy Cassan.

"A lot of families and individuals are trying to survive on very limited incomes," she said.

The causes of their plight include a lack of available jobs, lack of education, job loss, split families and no affordable housing, she said.

"Lack of basic needs, and living in poverty, can lead to ill health, mental illness such as depression, domestic situations due to frustration, crime, loss of hope in one's life," she said.

Port Cares tries to focus on assisting people before they reach the crisis point by providing them financial assistance and access to resources in hopes of getting them get back on their feet.

She said most people will look at getting shelter first, so often other basic needs are secondary — things such as nutrition, proper winter attire and school supplies.

Port Cares' new \$121,000 Niagara Region Prosperity Initiative grant is earmarked for single parents on assistance and working poor with children aged five to 19. The grant pays for \$100 gift cards for food, back-to-school supplies and clothing, and winter clothes for youth and adults.

"We have a huge number of youth between the ages of 15 to 25 who are struggling to survive on their own. They have no parental guidance or finances to help them survive," Cassan said.

"The Prosperity projects funding assists youth

in their struggle to survive, eat and keep warm during the winter months. Single mothers are the worse for not having winter clothing (for themselves). They get everything for their children first," she said.

"Another great benefit of this program is that all gift cards are purchased from Port Colborne stores, therefore stimulating the community economy. The great thing about the Prosperity funds is they get back into the community."

This year, Port Cares distributed 114 cards for back-to-school, the food cards are distributed monthly to those who fit the criteria and the winter clothing program is just starting to roll out.

There are two programs that provide year-round assistance with utilities: the Winter Warmth program is funded by the United Way and helps people with the costs of gas bills and the Niagara Emergency Energy Fund funded by Niagara Region.

"The need for utility assistance has risen every year for the past six years," Cassan said.

"We can only assume this is due to the rise in cost of living, larger population of seniors on fixed incomes, and increase of people on assistance."

There are also some people who have been caught by aggressive door-to-door salespeople, she said.

"A lot of people are being misinformed by solicitors coming to their doors, and consequently signing a contract that locks them into a fixed price, which often turns out to cause financial hardship. We have had clients come in that have been without gas for five months, with no way of financially getting assistance to get it turned on. They go without hot water and heat if not for these programs. They are essential for some folks."

Port Cares tries to educate the people they assist through this program to get help before bills rise to \$800 or \$900. Early intervention can make a big difference, Cassan said. When bills do come in that high, it may require some co-ordination with Port Cares and the utility company, as well as other support services such as Ontario Works or the Ontario Disability Support Program.

In the past 12 months, Port Cares has assisted 114 families with utility bills. The demand increases with the cooler seasons, she said.

Cassan said when one looks at the number of clients assisted it seems people are aware of the programs exist — there's no shortage of need. Port Cares multi-services clients based on their individual needs.

These programs are only two of the many support services offered through client services and are complemented by programs such as Ostris for Kids, Adopt-a-Family, Give a Gift, the emergency food cupboard and the Canadian Tire Jumpstart program.

"We offer one-on-one support and referral. All our services are free and open to the community of Port Colborne and Wainfleet," Cassan said.

People looking for assistance or wanting to donate can call 905-834-3629.

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■ **DONATION:** Club lends helping hand to local family

MARYANNE FIRTH InPort News Photo

The Methot family were pleased to recently receive a cheque for \$250 from Club Frontenac to put forth towards behavioural therapy for four-year-old Riley who was diagnosed with autism. The funds were raised during the club's annual Texas hold'em tournament during SportsFest. Pictured from left, Chad Methot, Club Frontenac president Yves Cloutier, Riley Methot and mother Sabrina. Next year's February tournament is quickly approaching. Contact Cloutier at 905-834-6884.

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■ **WAINFLEET:** Council to decide fate of abandoned rail lines Jan. 12

## Abandoned rail corridor nears end of the line

KAESHA FORAND  
InPort News Staff

**WAINFLEET** — For more than a year the topic of abandoned rail lines has been the subject of much discussion in Wainfleet.

On Tuesday, Dec. 15 night, township council took one of its last steps forward to rid itself of the surplus land once and for all.

The disposal of former Canadian National Rail Corridor north of Forks Rd. and Hwy. 3 runs about 14.6 km long and measures about 30 metres wide.

It has divided council.

At the beginning of the process, Aids. Ted Hessels and Ron Kramer were in favour of converting the land into an ATV trail, however, Mayor Barb Henderson and Aids. Evan Main and Rudy Warkentin pushed forward the land sale and disposal.

The land was purchased in 1996 for \$45,000 to acquire the aggregate that once served as a bed for the rail line. The aggregate was removed and used for projects in the township.

In May 2008, council approved disposing of the property and since that date has moved forward with the disposal and sale to abutting residents for \$1 per portion of land.

Operations director Greg Wulsman said if the township did not dispose of the land, it would have been responsible for fencing the entire stretch — a costly project. It also would have borne costs and responsibility for policing, maintenance and liability.

At a Nov. 10 meeting, Len Aarts was a delegate. He offered some insight on the project. He suggested the township zone the rail lands to prevent the construction of buildings to ensure the township could reacquire the land if needed. He also said the parcels of land should be left as separate deeds, again for future acquisition.

At last week's council meeting, township planner Chuck Miller said both options were reviewed with the municipality's solicitor.

"There is no advantage to leaving them separate for the future," he said. "If the lands are surplus we probably won't be interested if someone builds a shed or barn."

He recommended council declare the land surplus and said there was no need to rezone the land from its current agricultural and hazard zoning.

Hessels was the only councillor to voice his opposition Dec. 15. He said a public meeting was never held to give residents the opportunity to voice their thoughts.

Henderson said she appreciated Aarts' thoughts but said "now is the proper time to declare this surplus."

The report recommended the township "declare the line surplus to the township needs, direct staff not to proceed with rezoning of the lands and re-affirm that the subject lands are required to be merged with adjacent lands as condition of sale."

A final decision will be made at the Jan. 12 meeting.

## localbrieff

### NEW EXCAVATOR TO BE USED TO HELP PROTECT WAINFLEET'S ENDANGERED SPECIES

**WAINFLEET** — With the purchase of a new excavator, the township will ensure it follows Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs guidelines when it works in areas where endangered species are present.

Wainfleet has the Fowler's toad, the Blanding's turtle, the Massasauga rattlesnake, the least bittern, a small wading bird on the threatened species list, and the spotted turtle, which is on the endangered species list.

Township districts that may have endangered or threatened species include the Shelton, Bessey Branch, Biederman, Eagle and CSW Drains No. 20, 4 and 14.

A draft agreement was created to ensure work timeliness are respected and that staff be required to photograph and document an area before and after work is completed.

The agreement also states the township must seek approval before working on these environmentally sensitive areas.

Work on drains will be performed with a new \$246,200 excavator provided by Norrax Canada Inc. (John Deere).

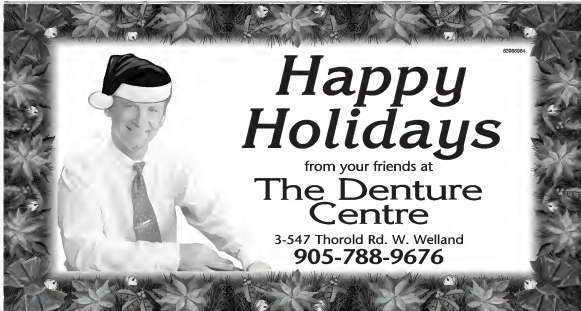
The excavator will have a life span of seven to eight years.

Drainage superintendent Harold Kelley expects a service sharing agreement with West Lincoln and Pelham will help cover some of the purchasing costs which are funded through drainage projects.

The township's drainage program typically begins in April and lasts for about eight months.

It is provincially renowned.

— InPort News Staff



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800994	2002	Ford	F250LT 3.90L	auto	Blue	17710
100124	2003	Ford	F150SE 4.4L	auto	Red	9880
020064	2003	Toyota	Camry V6E	auto	Black	9100
100134	2004	VW	Jetta V6	auto	Silver	10128
100254	2004	Saturn	I30	auto	Blue	8500
100172	2005	Ford	Focus ZX4 S23	auto	Blue	7453
100172	2005	Ford	Sport Trac 4.4L	auto	Black	8400

Stock#	Year	Make	Model	Trans	Color	Price
100174	2005	Jaguar	S-Type	auto	Black	6145
100184	2005	Ford	Sport Trac 4.4L	auto	Blue	11820
100184	2005	Ford	Focus Wagon S43	5-sp	White	7000
100284	2005	Chrysler	300C	auto	Black	10886
10068	2006	Ford	F150 3.2	auto	Blue	17000
10074	2006	Ford	Fusion SE	auto	Maroon	17401
10051	2006	Ford	Escape XLS	auto	Red	12141

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## ■ I'VE BEEN THINKING

## 'Ho! Ho! Ho!'

GORD ABRAHAM  
For InPort News

More than 2,700 years ago, the prophet Isaiah wrote these words from God. The old King James version starts it with: "Ho everyone who is thirsty."

The message: "Hey there! All who are thirsty, come to the water! Are you penniless? Come anyway, buy and eat! Come, buy your drinks, buy wine and milk. Buy without money — everything's free! Why do you spend your money on junk food, your hard-earned cash on cotton candy? Listen to me, listen well: Eat only the best, fill yourself with only the finest. Pay attention, come close now, listen carefully to my life-giving, life-nourishing words."

At that time, God's people were invited to come to him for all their inner needs and desires to be met. Seven hundred years later, Jesus picked up the invitation, He cried out: "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Rivers of living water will brim and spill out of the depths of anyone who believes in me this way, just as the Scripture says." (He said this in regard to the spirit, whose those who believed in him were about to receive.) John 7:35.

The invitation to come to God is still being brought to us today. Now that all the excitement of Christmas is here and passing, we start to feel that sense of longing again. God calls us to surrender to his son from all of life's desires to be satisfied in him all year round.

A reading from my friend Ken speaks to the same invitation: "Its Christmas night. The midnight hour has chimed and I should be asleep, but I am awake. I'm kept awake by one stunning thought. The world was different this week. It was temporarily transformed."

"The magical dust of Christmas glittered on the cheeks of humanity ever so briefly, reminding us of what is worth having and what we were intended to be. We forgot our compulsion with winning, wooing and warring. We put away our ladders and ladders. We hung up our stop watches and weapons. We stepped off our race-tracks and roller coasters and looked outward toward the star of Bethlehem."

It's the season to be jolly because, more than at any other time, we think of him. More than in any other season, His name is on our lips. And the result? For a few precious hours our heavenly yearnings intermesh and we become a chorus. A raucous chorus of construction workers, Toronto lawyers, new immigrants, homemakers, students and a thousand other peculiar people who are banking that Bethlehem's mystery is in reality, a reality.

"Come and behold him," we sing, stirring even the sleepest of shepherds and pointing them toward the Christ child. For a few precious hours, he is beheld. Christ the Lord.

Those who pass the year without seeing him suddenly see him. People who have been accustomed to using his name in vain, pause to use it in praise. Eyes, now free of the blindness of self, marvel at his majesty. All of a sudden he is everywhere.

It's Christmas night. In a few hours, the cleanup will begin. Lights will come down, trees will be thrown out. Size 36 will be exchanged for size 40, eggnog will be on sale for half price. Soon life will be normal again. December's generosity will become January's payments and the magic will begin to fade.

But, for the moment, the magic is still in the air. I want to savour the spirit just one bit more. I want to pray that those who behold him today will look for him next August.

If God came into focus so vividly in December, how much more could he be with us if we choose to bring him into our lives every day?

You are probably reading this just after Christmas Day and realize all the sentimental "Ho! Ho! Ho!" is over. There seems to be an emptiness, a thirst, a hunger for more that Christmas just satisfied for a moment.

Why not take Jesus up on his invitation? Read the story of Jesus for yourself. Christmas is just the start of a whole new life with Christ the Lord.

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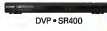
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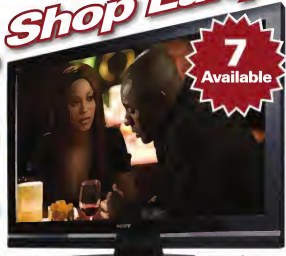
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## ■ council brief

## ■ HEALTH CARE

## STAFF CUTBACKS FORCE LATE BUDGET TALKS

**PORT COLBORNE** — The financial impact of Port Colborne's new sports complex will be part of the discussion during city council budget deliberations in January.

Ward 1 Coun. David Barrick said during the Dec. 14 meeting he wants to know "what the ripple effect" will be on other capital projects in the city.

He also wants to know how the new sports complex will impact on the city's financial status as a whole.

While he credited the work being done by the sports complex steering committee, he said, "Our job is more global in nature."

When it comes to budgeting, Barrick said "the more information council has up front, the better."

City treasurer Peter Senese said staff vacancies and several large projects underway have pushed 2010 budget deliberations back to January. Normally, council schedules at least one public budget meeting in December.

Senese said senior staff at city hall did meet as early as last month to discuss the 2010 budget.

"Staff shortfalls and the number of projects we have on the go is taking a toll on us," Senese said.

—InPort News Staff

## Port Colborne, Wainfleet call for probe of NHS

ALLAN BENNER

InPort News

**PORT COLBORNE** — Three south Niagara communities have thrown their support behind a Niagara Falls council resolution asking the provincial government to appoint an investigator to probe Niagara Health System's administration.

Monday Dec. 14, the municipal councils of Port Colborne and Fort Erie voted to support a resolution made Nov. 30 by Niagara Falls councillors. It calls on the provincial government to appoint a person to "investigate and report on the quality of the management and administration at the Niagara Health System."

Tuesday Dec. 15, Wainfleet township added its support to the resolution.

Although the resolution was essentially an endorsement of an Ontario Medical Association recommendation to ask the provincial government to investigate concerns raised by doctors about the emergency department at Greater Niagara General Hospital (GNGH), Port Colborne Mayor Vance Badawey said the resolution transcends that community's borders.

"When we look at the resolution that came out of the Falls it's valid because it outlines this progression of bad decisions right from the start," Badawey said last Thursday.

For instance, although the Niagara Falls resolution refers to plans to eliminate services such as maternity and pedi-

atrics at GNGH, Badawey pointed out that the health system has the same plans for Welland hospital.

"It's not only (about) the Falls as is outlined in this resolution, but it's the entire southern part of Niagara including Welland," he said.

"And we're not only going to bat and going to battle for the Port Colborne General Hospital, we're also doing it on behalf of Welland residents and the Welland hospital, as well as Wainfleet and Pelham residents."

Badawey said bad decisions have been made over the past several years, while the provincial government has turned a blind eye to the problems.

"There's no question that we're asking for the broader issues to be investigated of overall equal health care for all Niagara residents."

Pat Schofield from the People's Health Care Coalition said her organization is pleased with the support councils from the south Niagara communities have given to Niagara Falls' motion.

"Since GNGH is the destination hospital for anybody in Niagara with stroke symptoms, it is imperative the ED (emergency department) and hospital in Niagara Falls are healthy," Schofield said.

"If they are not well staffed and equipped with enough beds it impacts us all. We were very happy to see Port Colborne, Wainfleet and Fort Erie support this resolution."

In the meantime, we understand the NHS is cutting 22 more beds in Welland, 10 in Port Colborne and seven in Fort Erie. We need that investigation into the NHS now."

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## ■ PEOPLE, PLACES

# Friendships lost and rekindled; mourned and celebrated



George Duma  
BY GEORGE

**W**illiam Thomas wears many hats. Author, humour columnist, raconteur, founder and host of the monthly Readings at Roselawn — The Canadian Authors' Series, scriptwriter, celebrated cat and dog lover, much-sought-after guest speaker. The list goes on.

The hat I have most appreciated over the years is friend.

Bill and I haven't always seen eye-to-eye. In fact, up until a few months ago, we had been estranged friends. It was my fault.

A few years ago, when I was still managing editor of *The Tribune*, the word came down from on high at Osprey head office in Markham: cut costs. The message was clear — "Do whatever you need to do, but we want to see a decrease in spending."

Now, I had been in enough management positions during the course of my life to know how much I dreaded those words. No longer was the status quo enough. I had to go into action mode to decrease the costs of *The Tribune's* editorial department. It meant paring down the numbers.

To make a long story short and to spare you the grim details, I made a number of cuts in an effort to make the department leaner. It meant dropping some of our freelance columnists while asking others to take a pay cut. Bill fell into the latter grouping.

I hated making that call, absolutely despised it to the point of being nauseous for two days beforehand. I had to ask Bill to pay pretty much a 50% cut on what we paid him. I didn't want to lose his column but under this new budget I was handed, I simply couldn't afford to pay him at the rate he was being paid.

To say Bill wasn't happy with my proposal would be an understatement. I believe our friendship pretty much ended that day. And who could blame him?

That was almost five years ago.



GEORGE DUMA Staff Photos

Left: Bud, our golden retriever, was laid to rest about two weeks ago. Right: Birthday boy Bill Bollong celebrated his 50th last Sunday with the help of his wife Florence and a gathering of friends and family.

A few months ago, we reconciled. I don't blame him for being angry all this time but I'm glad we shared a common bond: bygones. Life is simply too short.

Besides, we shared a common bond; we both had old dogs that were vital parts of our lives, he with Jake, his border collie, and we with our beloved golden retriever, Bud.

A little more than two weeks ago, about six weeks before his 15th birthday, we had to make the decision every animal lover dreads from the day they bring their new family member home — it was time.

Bud had been seriously incontinent for weeks. In addition, as happens with golden retrievers and Labradors, his hips had been deteriorating for months. In fact, glucosamine and Metacam, a wonder drug if there ever was one for dogs, kept him mobile for so much longer than he would have been.

But that Wednesday morning, it became clear that we needed to make the call to our vet's office, the Main West Animal Hospital on Broadway Ave. in Welland.

I called Bill on my way in to work. Just to let him know.

I got his voice machine and left a message. We played voice tag for the next 24 hours but he left us the nicest message one could imagine in those circumstances.

"Hi, it's Bill," he said on Thursday morning, the day after we put down Bud.

"You're probably feeling relief and you're feeling guilt about the fact you're feeling relief."

And that's exactly how we felt. There was definite relief in that we weren't watching our dog suffer anymore. But there was most certainly guilt because of the relief. He hit it right on the head.

As of this writing, Bill is still struggling with his own decision. Jake is 18 and Bill knows his day of decision is coming. In fact, it was something Bill said recently that made our decision easier.

"Not today," he wrote recently. "Not today."

Well, our "today" came. \*\*\*

Turning 50 is always a great reason to

have party.

So it was last Sunday, when my buddy Bill Bollong hit the big 5-0 and his wife Florence threw him a neighbourhood party. And what a party it was.

Throng of folks showed up to wish Bill a merry one and it was a wonderful way to catch up with friends and neighbours.

Happy birthday, my friend. May you have 50 more.

\*\*\*

That's it for this week, dear readers. I hope you have a wonderful and safe Christmas. This is really the time of year when we all count the blessings we have. It's a pity that doesn't happen every day.

George Duma is a resident of Port Colborne and has spent 30 years in the newspaper business. He is currently a member of the Journalism faculty at Niagara College. He welcomes comments and column suggestions and can be reached at gduma@cogeco.ca.

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# **HOCKEY:** Port Colborne team wins Golden Puck tournament



Supplied Photo

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IMPORT NEWS

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IMPORT NEWS

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■ **SCHOOL LIFE:** St. Patrick students fill stockings for Port Cares

KAESHA FORAND Staff Photo

Students from St. Patrick Elementary School collected school supplies, toiletries and treats to fill 69 stockings for Port Cares Reach Out Centre clients. Students who collected items include from front left Alexis Frey, Jenna Vrbancac and teacher Kim Guthoeri. From back left are Hailey Dewar, Elizabeth Klauk, Sarah Grenier, Megan Milinkovic, Kaylea Dube and Courtney Ravale present the stockings to Mary Anne Feagan of the Reach Out Centre.

■ **RENOVATION**

## Historic Humberstone Hall makeover to be completed by April 2010

InPort News Staff

PORT COLBORNE — Historic Humberstone Hall is about to get a nearly \$280,000 facelift.

Council approved a tender for renovations to the Old Humberstone building, at 76 Main St. West, to lowest bidder King Contractors of Niagara Falls.

Funds for the \$278,579 renovation contract will be taken from a \$4-million fund approved in last year's budget for the Gateway Community Improvement Plan.

Ron Hanson, director of operations for the city, said the city has received notice of another \$50,000 in accessibility funding to improve the washrooms and widen doorways within the historic property.

"There will be an additional boost of money going into the project," Hanson said.

Ward 3 Coun. Gary Bruno wanted assurances that parking lots, interior furnishing and landscaping would be completed during the renovations.

"I just want to see it done right the first time," Bruno said.

He was concerned the project not be done "piecemeal."

The renovation plan calls for removal of the old washrooms and kitchen and replacement of barrier-free washrooms. The main hall space will get new flooring and ceilings and electrical upgrades.

The contractor will also demolish a 1955 addition to the building.

Construction is to be completed by the end of April.

Council had originally planned to phase the work over several years.

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